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RECOLLECTIONS OF LOS ANGELES — 1875 TO 1885.

JNO. MANSFIELD.

Reminiscences of persons not specially observing may often recall events to them not deemed of sufficient importance to note at the time, but may have real significance as historical factors of local interest, not observed by the general public. The value of these observations depend upon the importance of events, as they may occur, in serving to illustrate more fully even minor points that so often and readily fade with the lapse of time. It is by the faithful record of these that history is made and perpetuated.

An intimation that on this our tenth anniversary I would be expected to relate some experiences of the decade following my entry into Los Angeles May 1, 1875, I confess that to me it seems without an incident worthy of recording.

I came, as some others did, from Sacramento by rail to Caliente, and from there to Los Angeles in a jerky wagon by courtesy called a stage, in which we floundered for twenty-four hours over mountains, plains and through gullies, more or less at the peril of our lives, till we reached San Fernando the next morning about day-break. Without rest, sleep or satisfying refreshment to this point, our judgment of men and things, as we saw them, was more or less critical. My objective point on this trip was some of the dry interior valleys of Mexico, to counteract the effects of the other sort to which for a year or more I had been subjected, entailing what seemed to me a lasting affliction of chills and fever. At San Fernando we took what appeared to be an oil or work train on the unfinished portion of the Southern Pacific Railroad from that point to Los Angeles. At that time the town of Los Angeles to a stranger appeared old, rambling and fragmentary. The only building or business block of importance was the Temple Block, which stood up alone among its less pretentious surroundings as the result of a sudden impulse of an early boomer, whose financial extinction had left its warning to other growing but undeveloped ambition of municipal grandeur or commercial greatness. Notwithstanding the unpropitious and tumbledown appearance of the place, the conditions I sought seemed to be here, and I remained; and as we were tourists, we looked over the town at our leisure (of which we had plenty), and were accorded such

attention as was supposed to be due distinguished tender-feet and possible investors.

Where the Nadeau House and First Presbyterian Church now stand was a horse corral ; the same where the Hollenbeck is located ; and between these now prominent hotels was Towle's blacksmith shop, with other small workshops and chicken coops. The most conspicuous structure on Main street was the "round-house." This was the inspiration of a crank, who sought to typify the creation and end of all living by the supposed luxuries of the living in his castle of the blest, with the termination of all things as represented by tombs and lay figures in the garden attached. But all this has long since passed, and not unlike man himself, who yields to the sturdy tread of superior forces behind him, gives up to the claims of an irresistible succession, and is remembered only in the future for the good or bad in life. Mr. Beaudry was then mayor, and seemed to be imbued with a laudable spirit of enterprise ; but municipal support from either council or people was lacking, and in place of it Los Angeles seemed to be drifting aimlessly along, quite indifferent to the great events of the world, blissfully content in its half-tropic surroundings, emphasizing in its inertness the *dulce fac niente* of its once dominant race.

Of hotels, the St. Charles (modernized from the Bella Union), United States, La Fayette and Pico House constituted the list — all *first class* ! At some of these I lived ; and though I had eaten hard-tack from the tail end of an army wagon and taken my coffee and junk standing in line with more circumspection than ceremony, these morsels were sweet compared to the product of the razor-back of the vicinage and the wild bovine of the plains of Texas. My two companions, however, more fastidious than myself, became restive, and being possessed of that inquiring instinct of the Yankee to improve present conditions, encountered in their evening stroll the chicken (?) tamale man, which at once aroused their desire for trade and the possession of the tempting morsel so deftly trussed up in corn husks. Immediate success attended their negotiations, when, lo ! on inspection, the alleged *chicken* proved to be the disjointed remains of jack-rabbit and sea-gull, with its ever present fish odor, which the native purveyor had attempted to modify with chille pepper and a liberal supply of the heroic and unconquerable *garlic* ! At this the line was drawn as an experience not down in the guide book of the tourist, and suspended all further inquiries in that line of adjuncts to an insufficient or unsatisfactory meal. But a change soon came. A sort of financial cyclone came over the land, and in a whiff every bank in the city was closed. Two soon reopened, but the other —

Temple and Workman, which had for years been the shibboleth of the paisano and the basque, with a large other class, whose friendship was its greatest curse — went down beyond redemption. So complete was its collapse that \$300,000 of its alleged assets were sold by the receiver under an order of Judge Hoffman of the United States Court for thirty dollars. Before this, however, an attempt had been made by its owners and manager to rehabilitate the bank by an increase of capital. For this purpose a loan of \$250,000 was made from E. J. Baldwin, thinking that if it could again open its doors its old time friends would rally to its support and put it again on the high road to its former credit and prosperity. This reasoning proved fallacious. The moment its doors were reopened under this arrangement, those who had funds on deposit availed themselves of the opportunity to withdraw and close their accounts. This, with no renewals of deposits, or of business as before, resulted almost immediately in closing its doors for good. Of Mr. Temple, the manager, those who knew him felt that a large part of the bank's unfortunate condition was due to his kind and sympathetic nature. Gentle and confiding to a degree, enterprising and public spirited as well, he could not say no! and became the unconscious victim of boomers and schemers who had secured his name or money to a thousand and one moonshine enterprises, and when in their flat failure he was the only one left responsible to pay the losses. This, without a suspicion or taint of dishonesty, was one of the many ways the funds of the bank became dissipated and lost. After his failure, Mr. Temple, harassed and mortified by its calamitous results, retired to his country seat, and even there, in a supposed retreat from the business world, he was pursued by creditors, with attachments and executions, till at length he yielded to a ceaseless and all-corroding mental depression over his misfortune, and it is said he died in a sheep camp on the outlying portions of his once vast and princely estate. Those who were here can hardly recall these almost tragic incidents without a feeling of sadness — that one so uniformly gentle, sympathetic and charitable should be the victim of a fate so hard and merciless, without a further impulse of its unnecessary cruelty.

Notwithstanding the unfortunate financial situation and other drawbacks, the business year of 1876 opened with a fair outlook for increased development, which, with timely rains of the preceding winter, gave assurances to the agriculturist of fair returns for his labor, with a hope of something for export. It was during this year the Los Angeles and Independence Railroad was completed to Santa Monica, which gave to the city another outlet by railroad to the sea, besides a large amount of grading and other work on its northern

extension beyond Los Angeles. The construction of this road was largely due to the enterprise and public spirit of Mr. John P. Jones, under the supervision of Capt. Crawford, its chief engineer. But on completion of the Southern Pacific to Los Angeles the following year it soon absorbed the former road by purchase, and has ever since been run by the Southern Pacific as a part of its Southern California system.

Among some of the notable structures in Los Angeles for 1877 were the Roman Catholic Cathedral and Baker block on Main street and Odd Fellows' Hall on Spring street. Later on, however, our seeming prosperity for this year was checked by a drought and an epidemic of smallpox so malignant in character as to nearly paralyze all business, and many of those who could left for other and more encouraging fields of industry ; and, although the railroad was completed in this year, giving us a through service to San Francisco, the cry of hard times continued to be heard, and the railroad, which should have been encouraged and looked upon as an industrial and commercial relief, was denounced as the author of all our misfortunes. This condition of things continued till, when the census was taken in June, 1880, Los Angeles had the beggarly number of 11,200 people, and those of us who could not get away knew by sad experience what "short commons" meant. But as time wore on the condition of things began to improve. The constitution of '79 had been adopted. New laws and new lords were looked for. Public sentiment, so long dormant as to local affairs, began to rouse itself and to demand a more thorough recognition of its rights and needs from the State.

An active and energetic legislative delegation at Sacramento had procured, in 1881, the passage of a bill for the establishment of a normal school at this place. The next year the Nadeau House was commenced, with many other substantial structures. In 1883 was held in San Francisco the great triennial convention of the Knights Templar of the United States. Through the influence of many of the order here, large numbers of this intelligent body of fraters, on their way home, were induced to stop over in Los Angeles, where they were hospitably entertained by the citizens with wine and fruit and free transportation around and through the city and country, many of whom declared that as to them it was a revelation long to be remembered, and I think it may well be claimed that from the Knights thus entertained, in connection with judicious advertising of our products and climatic comparison with other countries, was the awakening of outside public sentiment in favor of Los Angeles that resulted in a steady immigration that soon after set in and continued till the boom of 1887.

Though I came from the interior by rail and stage, the principal travel to and from the town in 1875 was by steamer, which made bi-weekly trips from San Francisco to San Diego, landing in the offing sometimes at San Pedro and sometimes at Santa Monica, and I well remember the arrival of two stages from the latter place at the Lafayette Hotel in a drenching rain on the 13th of November, the first of that year.

Of the schools of that year the most noted and principal was the High School on the hill, of which Dr. Lucky was principal. The other two that I remember were the Bath-street school and one in a small brick building on the corner of Second and Spring streets on land now occupied by the Bryson block.

Of courts of record there were two—the then Seventeenth Judicial District Court, with Sepulveda as Judge, and the County Court, with probate and criminal jurisdiction, with O'Melveny as Judge.

Of the lawyers practicing in the courts at that time, they seemed to me like the collection of Silas Wegg in "Our Mutual Friend," both curious and various, and of whom I refrain to further speak.

The religious element of Los Angeles was looked after by several clergymen of zeal and piety. I remember only four church edifices—the Methodist on Fort street (Broadway now), with Rev. Mr. Hickey as pastor; the Episcopal, corner of New High and Temple, Rev. Mr. Hill as pastor; the Congregational, on New High street, Rev. Mr. Packard pastor, and the Catholic church on the Plaza.

Whatever may be said of the lack of enterprises of a commercial or developing character, the schools and churches of that period were fairly well attended and supported. But the contrast of then and now is more than marvelous, giving to the zealous workers of each renewed hope of equal, if not greater, success in the future.